

# STOMACH CANCER



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Uncontrolled growth of malignant cells in the stomach. It affects adults over age 40 and is twice as common in men as women. Unfortunately, most people do not have symptoms until the disease is advanced. It is common in Japan.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Early stages:

- Vague symptoms of indigestion, such as fullness, burping, nausea and poor appetite.

Later stages:

- Unexplained weight loss.
- Loss of appetite.
- Vomiting blood.
- Black stools.
- Fullness after eating small amounts.
- Anemia.
- Pain in the upper abdomen.
- Mass in the upper abdomen that can be felt (sometimes).

### CAUSES

Unknown. Evidence suggests that a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables may be a factor.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Males over age 40.
- Family history of stomach cancer.
- Pernicious anemia.
- Excess alcohol consumption.
- Chronic gastritis (especially associated with *H. pylori* infection).
- Absence of normal stomach acid, previous stomach surgery or partial stomach removal.
- Diet that includes many smoked, pickled and salted foods; low amounts of protein and low amounts of fresh fruits and green, leafy vegetables.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Don't ignore symptoms of indigestion that last more than a few days.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet.
- Decrease alcohol consumption if you drink more than 1 or 2 drinks a day.
- Examine stool yearly or more often with home tests for blood in the stool.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This condition is currently considered incurable. The 5-year survival rate is low even with treatment. Scientific research into causes and treatment continues, so there is hope for increasingly effective treatment and cure.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Internal bleeding.
- Misdiagnosis as a stomach ulcer.
- Fatal spread to liver, bones and lungs.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Diagnostic tests may include laboratory blood studies for anemia, stomach tests for acid and stool tests for bleeding as well as surgical diagnostic procedures such as biopsy through a gastroscope and CT and x-rays of the stomach, esophagus and small intestine.
- Surgery to remove part or all of the stomach is the recommended treatment if the cancer has not spread.
- Chemotherapy treatment may achieve a temporary response.
- Additional information available from the American Cancer Society, local branch listed in the telephone directory, or call (800) ACS-2345. Another source is the Cancer Information Clearinghouse at (800) 4-CANCER.

### MEDICATIONS

- Anticancer drugs (sometimes).
- Pain relievers.

### ACTIVITY

As tolerated by your energy level.

### DIET

Eat frequent, small meals of soft foods. Try to maintain high calorie intake.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of stomach cancer.
- Indigestion occurs after surgery and does not respond to medication in a few days.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.